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CEN[redacted]LLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY Poland

SUBJECT Fire Control Tactics of the 12th Independent Air Artillery Ob[redacted]rvation Squadron in Mierzecice

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1. [redacted] a report containing information on the fire control tactics of the 12th Independent Air Artillery Observation Squadron in Mierzecice, Poland.

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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY : Poland

DATE: 16 October 1957

SUBJECT : Fire Control Tactics of the 12th Independent Air Artillery Observation Squadron in Mierzecice, Poland.

NO. OF PAGES: 2

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General Information

1. The 12th Independent Air Artillery Observation Squadron (12 Eskadra Samodzielna Lotnictwa Artyleryjskiego) was stationed at Mierzecice Airfield near Mierzecice (N 50-27, E 19-08). [1] The mission of this squadron was to spot, direct and control artillery fire. This unit was equipped with 12 IL-10 aircraft and its overall strength was 114 men. The commander was Major Roman Harasimowicz.

Combat Exercises

2. There were two basic types of combat exercises in which the 12th IAAOS participated: major exercises, which took place once a year during annual joint maneuvers; and local exercises, which were accomplished in the vicinity of the airfield. Major exercises lasted approximately three months during which time each pilot and artillery observer of the squadron participated in approximately eight to 15 problems, each problem lasting from one to one and one-half hours. Local exercises took place once or twice weekly throughout the remainder of the year. During major exercises pilots and observers directed actual artillery fire, but in local exercises training grenades, resembling exploding artillery sheels when detonated, were used.

3. One IL-10 aircraft, with pilot and observer, was assigned to one artillery unit for each problem. The size of the artillery unit varied from a platoon to an entire regiment, depending on the type of problem. However, during certain problems two aircraft were assigned to one unit; one directed the fire while the other observed from a higher altitude, standing by as replacement in case the spotting aircraft went out of commission.

Fire Control Tactics During a Typical Combat Problem

4. The pilot was instructed to arrive over the target area at a specific time. Enroute the artillery observer established radio contact with the ground radio station from which he received the general location of the target. The flight altitude to and from the target was from 300 to 400 meters. Upon arriving over the area, both the pilot and observer scrutinized the terrain for the target, which was usually a camouflaged wooden tank or cannon. The flight altitude during this operation was not prescribed; it was the pilot's prerogative to fly at the most convenient altitude in order to spot the target.

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Upon location of the target the artillery observer recorded its location on his map (1:25000) and radioed the pinpoint location to the ground radio station which acknowledged the message and relayed it to the artillery unit. After the artillery unit accomplished the necessary computing, the aircraft was notified of the artillery's readiness to fire, and the altitude of shell trajectory. The pilot then adjusted his altitude accordingly, not losing sight of the target. Immediately after the battery fired, the ground radio station notified the aircraft. The observer and pilot then searched the target area for explosions. As soon as exploding shells were sighted the observer notified the ground radio station by saying "observing"; if no explosions were seen he said "not observing", and asked for another volley. After having recorded the points of impact on his map, the observer computed the distances, often by guesswork, and notified the battery of his findings. The battery then fired another volley. After the target was thoroughly hit each cannon fired individually to determine the accuracy of each piece. Upon the completion of individual firing, barrage firing was executed by the entire artillery unit assigned to the problem. In this type of firing each gun crew was free to fire as rapidly as possible. The target was considered covered and destroyed when hits were made within 50 meters. After the firing was accomplished, aerial photographs of the target area were taken by the observer to determine fire accuracy. Photographs of the target were also taken prior to the artillery bombardment in order to spot faulty camouflage. The camera used was a Russian AFA-Im. This concluded the problem. On the following day, the air crews and artillery personnel attended a joint debriefing.

Communications

5. Radio Frequencies: radio frequencies used during problems were always between 2200 and 4000 kilocycles. Frequencies differed for each problem.

6. Call Signs: call signs used during combat problems consisted of a certain name and number for the aircraft, such as "Ptak 2", and of just a name for the ground station, such as "Domek". Call signs were different for each problem.

7. Emergency Signals In Case of Radio-Communications Failure: ground signaling was accomplished with the use of white canvas strips laid on the ground forming letters, crosses, etc. Example: a cross meant "I cannot hear you". The canvas strips were rectangular in shape and measured approximately 4 x 1 meters. Ground signals were also accomplished with the use of colored flares, mainly red and green. A series of red flares (usually 5) meant "clear the area immediately", a series of green flares meant "all is clear and everything is ready". Ground signals were not standard and were changed for each problem; however, the two basic flare signals "clear out" and "all is clear" were usually the same. Emergency air signals were made by the aircraft by performing a series of movements such as wing dipping. These signals were standard; [redacted] 50X1-HUM wing dripping meant "I cannot hear you", flying [redacted] 50X1-HUM with the left wing low meant "fire to the left" and flying with the right wing low meant "fire to the right".

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